

# **Glossary of Transportation Terms**

**ARTERIAL HIGHWAY:** Arterial highways serve major traffic movements or major traffic corridors. While they may provide access to abutting land, their primary function is to serve traffic moving through the area.

**AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUME (ADT):** The average number of vehicles that travel on a given road during the day. As defined by traffic engineers, it is the total traffic volume during a given time period in whole days (24-hour periods), greater than one day and less than one year, divided by the number of days in that time period.

**CAPACITY:** The maximum number of vehicles that can reasonably be expected to pass over a lane or a roadway during a given time period under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions. Typically, the maximum expressway capacity for automobiles is 2,000 vehicles per lane per hour.

**COLLECTOR HIGHWAY:** Collector highways are those highways that link local highways to arterial highways.

**COLLECTORS:** In rural areas, routes serving intra-county, rather than statewide travel. In urban areas, streets providing direct access to neighborhoods as well as direct access to arterials.

**CONTROLLED ACCESS:** Partial access restriction that gives preference to through traffic. Also provides for connections to selected public routes and to certain other adjacent locations where vehicles can enter or leave a roadway safely without interfering with through traffic.

**LEVEL OF SERVICE:** A rating system used by traffic engineers to determine a roadway's ability to provide adequate capacity for the volume of traffic (number of vehicles) using the road.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA):** A document prepared early in a planning process that evaluates the potential environmental consequences of a project or activity. An assessment includes the same topical areas as an EIS, but only assesses the effects of a preferred action, and in less detail than an EIS. An EA results in a decision, based on an assessment of the degree of impact of an action, that an EIS is necessary, or that an action will have no significant effect and a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) can be made.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS):** An EIS is a full disclosure, detailed report which, pursuant to Section 102(2)C of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), establishes the need for the proposed action, identifies alternatives with the potential to meet the identified need, analyzes the anticipated environmental consequences of identified alternatives, and discusses how adverse effects may be mitigated. An EIS is prepared in two stages: a draft statement which is made available to the public for review and a final statement which is revised on the basis of comments made on the draft statement.

**ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW:** A beginning inventory or summary assessment of environmental features in a study area, usually performed during systems planning or preliminary environmental activities. From this preliminary information, the environmental impacts of the study alternatives will be determined. This overview may sometimes be referred to as Environmental Screening.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI):** A FONSI is a document issued in conjunction with an EA that "briefly present[s] the reasons why an action ... will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an [EIS] therefore will not be prepared.

**HAZARDOUS WASTE:** An environmental impact category encompassing all types of permitted and unregulated materials, sites, and substances which require prudent handling and treatment to prevent harm or danger.

**IMPACTS:** Positive or negative effects upon the natural or human environment resulting from transportation projects.

**MITIGATION MEASURES:** Specific design commitments made during the environmental evaluation and study process that serve to moderate or lessen impacts deriving from the proposed action. These measures may include planning and development commitments, environmental measures, right-of-way improvements, and agreements with resource or other agencies to effect construction or post construction action.

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA):** Established by Congress in 1969, NEPA requires that Federal Agencies consider environmental matters when considering to carry out federal actions. This could include the preparation of environmental assessments (EAs) or environmental impact statement (EIS) for projects with the potential to result in significant effects on the environment.

**WETLANDS:** those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency or duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

**FEDERAL AID PROJECT:** An activity, study, survey, project, or other work related to transportation authorized in advance by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or other federal agency, and which is paid for either partially or fully by public funds.

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA):** The FHWA deals with highway transportation in its broadest scope, administering all federal highway transportation programs, including FLHP.

**FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY PROGRAM (FLHP):** The FLHP funds transportation system investment for transportation facilities providing access to and within National Forests, National Parks, National Refuges, Indian Lands and other public lands.

**FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA):** The FTA funds the development of mass transportation systems such as subway and bus systems.

**INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT OF 1991 (ISTEA):** Federal legislation that mandated the way transportation decisions were to be made and funded. This landmark \$155 billion federal legislation signed into law in December 1991, called for broad changes in transportation decision-making, and included major revisions to metropolitan and statewide planning processes. ISTEA emphasized diversity and balance of modes, as well as the preservation of existing systems over construction of new facilities. The law expired in September 1997, and was followed by TEA-21.

**TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (TEA-21):** Signed by President Clinton in June 1998, this Federal transportation legislation retains and expands many of the program created in 1991 under ISTEA. The legislation reauthorized Federal surface transportation programs for six years (1998-2003), and significantly increases overall funding for transportation.

**CORRIDOR:** Land between two termini within which traffic, transit, land use, topography, environment, and other characteristics are evaluated for transportation purposes.

**DESIGN CRITERIA:** Established state and national standards and procedures that guide the establishment of roadway layouts, alignments, geometry, and dimensions for specified types of roadways in certain defined conditions. The principal design criteria for roadways are traffic volume, design speed, the physical characteristics of vehicles, the classification of vehicles, and the percentage of various vehicle classification types that use the roadway.

**FUNCTIONAL ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION:** The organization of roadways into a hierarchy based on the character of service provided. Typical classifications include arterial, local, and collection roadways.

**GEOMETRIC DESIGN:** Design that deals with the dimensions of a facility and the relationships of its features such as alignment, profile, grades, widths, sight distances, clearance, and slopes as distinguished from structural design which is concerned with thickness, composition of materials, and load-carrying capacity.

**INTERMODAL:** A mode is a particular form of transportation, such as automobile, transit, carpool, ship, and bicycle. Intermodal refers to connections between modes.

**LIMITED-ACCESS HIGHWAY:** A highway that has access to it restricted to designated points such as interchanges.

**MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY (MIS):** The MIS is an evaluation of the effectiveness (such as level of use and ability to meet the mobility needs of the public) and cost-effectiveness of alternative transportation investments in attaining local, State, and regional goals and objectives for the metropolitan or rural area. The study uses a cooperative process that leads to a decision on the design concept and fiscal scope of an investment(s). The recommended design concept(s) may result in additional development as a transportation project(s).

**NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE (ALSO KNOWN AS “NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE”):** Option of maintaining the status quo by not building transportation improvements. Usually results in eventual deterioration of existing transportation conditions. Serves as a baseline for comparison of “Build” Alternatives.

**PARK AND RIDE:** A transportation option whereby commuters park their cars in designated lots and complete their trips using public transportation or joining other commuters in a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) (e.g., buses, subways, and carpool/vanpool).

**PHASE I DESIGN:** Early phases of technical studies undertaken to determine all relevant aspects of transportation location, to identify feasible route alternatives or design options, and to assess various cost and benefit parameters before advancing the project into more detailed final design development.

**PHASE II DESIGN:** Detailed roadway design along a specific alignment. This phase includes completion Right of Way and Construction plans. Environmental commitments are incorporated into the plans during this phase.

**PRIME FARMLAND:** Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oil seed, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor and without intolerable soil erosion, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. It does not include land that is already committed to urban development or storage.

**PROGRAMMING:** A general term to refer to a series of activities carried out by planners, including data assessment, appraisal of identified planning needs, and consideration of available or anticipated fiscal resources to result in the drawing up, scheduling, and planning of a list of identified transportation improvements for a given period of time.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** A meeting designed to afford the public the fullest opportunity to express support of or opposition to a transportation project in an open forum at which a verbatim record (transcript) of the proceedings is kept.

**PUBLIC MEETING:** An announced meeting conducted by transportation officials designed to facilitate participation in the decision-making process and to assist the public in gaining an informed view of a proposed project at any level of the transportation project development process. Also, such a gathering may be referred to as a public information meeting.

**STATE-FUNDED PROJECT:** The design or construction of an improvement which is funded entirely with state highway or bridge funds.

**STUDY AREA:** A geographic area selected and defined at the outset of engineering or environmental evaluations, which is sufficiently adequate in size to address all pertinent project matters occurring within it.

**STUDY (OR PROJECT) LIMITS:** The physical end points of a proposed project or study, usually designated at geographic or municipal boundaries, at intersections, at roadway segments where cross sections change, or at the beginning or end of numbered state traffic routes.

**GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS):** A computer-based system that links the geographic location of map features to text information or databases.

**INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS):** Refers to the use of advanced technologies (such as traffic sensors and communications equipment) to improve transportation operations.

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO):** A planning group designated for each urban area with a population of 50,000 or more. Members include both private citizens and local government officials. An MPO addresses Federal aid planning mandates by producing local area transportation plans or transportation improvement programs on an annual or biannual basis, or by employing other strategies that make existing systems more efficient.

**STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN:** Identifies regional transportation goals, issues, and needs and defines the direction for regional planning, programming, and project development over a 20-year period.

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (STP):** A transportation funding program within TEA-21. STP funds may be used for roadway construction and improvements, operational improvement, transportation systems, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit, ridesharing programs and facilities and transportation planning and studies.

**TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP):** A three-year, prioritized program of transportation projects within a metropolitan or regional planning area proposed for federal funding. It includes all regionally significant projects, planning research activities and emergency relief projects.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (USDOT):** Establishes the nation's overall transportation policy. Under its umbrella there are ten administrations whose jurisdictions include highway planning, development and construction; urban mass transit; railroads; aviation; and the safety of waterways, ports, highways, and oil and gas pipelines.